



File Code: 1950-3

Date: August 30, 2007

Dear Reader,

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Bozeman Municipal Watershed fuels reduction project is available. The proposed project is designed to reduce the potential for severe and extensive wildfire in the Bozeman Municipal Watershed through a combination of thinning and controlled burns on about 5000 acres. The four main objectives of the project are:

1. Implement vegetation management activities to begin reducing the severity and extent of wildfire in the watershed.
2. Focus activities to reduce the risk of sediment and ash reaching the municipal water treatment facility in the event of a severe wildland fire.
3. Provide for firefighter and public safety by beginning to modify potential fire behavior.
4. Manage fuels in the wildland/urban interface to reduce the potential for spread of wildfire between the national forest and adjacent private lands.

The project area includes the lower portions of the Bozeman Creek and Hyalite Creek drainages.

The Forest Service has worked in cooperation with the City of Bozeman staff to develop the proposal and analyze its effects in this Draft EIS. Five alternatives are presented in the Draft EIS. Alternative 5 is identified as the preferred alternative. I have chosen Alternative 5 as my preferred alternative because it most effectively meets the purpose and need of reducing the potential for future severe and extensive wildfire. At the same time, it meets the Forest Plan standards for water quality, it requires fewer temporary roads, and it would best meet the visual quality standards. This was a delicate balance between removing dense vegetation to affect future fire behavior while maintaining water quality, fisheries habitat, and visual quality. I believe that alternative 5 strikes this balance.

Please provide the Forest Service with your comments during the review period of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This will enable the Forest Service to analyze and respond to the comments one at a time and to use information acquired in the preparation of the final environmental impact statement, thus avoiding undue delay in the decision making process. Reviewers should structure their response and comment to alert the agency to the reviewers' position and contentions. Comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 CFR 1503.3).

In accordance with the 36 CFR 215, comments must be received by October 31, 2007, which is within 45 days of the date of publication of the legal notice in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle. Written, oral, or electronic comments are acceptable. They should include: (1) name, address, telephone number, and organization represented, (if any); (2) title of the document on which the comment is being submitted; (3) specific facts and supporting reasons for the Responsible



Official to consider; and (4) signatures. For appeal eligibility, each individual or representative from each organization submitting comments must either sign the comments or verify their identity upon request. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Comments may be submitted electronically to the following e-mail address: **comments-northern-gallatin@fs.fed.us** and must be in one of the following formats: MS Word, Word Perfect or RTF. The subject line must contain the name of the project, BMW Fuels Reduction. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

The Forest Service and the City of Bozeman will hold an Open House on September 25 at the Bozeman Public Library to give the public an opportunity to learn more about the project. The Open House will be from 4:30 to 6:30 pm in the large meeting room. A public tour of the project area will be conducted on October 2 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Please respond to Jim Devitt by September 25 to sign up for the tour and get directions.

The Draft EIS and CD copies are available at Forest Service offices or can be reviewed at the Bozeman Public Library. Written comments on the DEIS are to be sent to: Gallatin National Forest, PO Box 130, Bozeman, MT 59771, *Attn: Jim Devitt – Re: BMW Fuels Reduction*. Additional information is available from Jose Castro at 406-522-2520 or Jim Devitt at 406-587-6749.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lisa Stoeffler (for)
THOMAS PUCHLERZ
Acting Forest Supervisor